

## ABSTRACT

The present invention provides methods for detecting the presence or absence of a difference between two related nucleic acid sequences. The methods achieve sensitivities great enough to detect the presence of any difference between the nucleic acids, even single  
5 nucleotide polymorphisms. In the methods, the nucleic acids are contacted under conditions in which they are capable of forming a stable four-way complex if the nucleic acids differ in sequence. The presence of the four way complex is determined with a detection molecule and a labeled four-stranded tracer molecule.

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